1; Huntingford E-4, 5 (1938-1939) 1953 FL6 Dorobo FL6

Agriculture

The Dorobo began to cultivate in a small way about 30 years ago (or even a little earlier) and at first they grew only eleusine. Though their inclinations were to become cattle-owners, conditions were unfavourable to the development of cattle-breeding as a primary activity and they have been forced to make agriculture a serious business; for the methods, implements, and even the seed used in this, they have been indebted to the Nandi.

Land

Those who live in A and B domicile categories (with whom alone we are concerned here) cultivate small plots in the open land which surrounds the forest. They have no rights of tenure, except the temporary ones acquired, according to Kenya law, if they live there as squatters under the Resident Native Labourers Ordinance. Their plots, *imbaret*, pl. *imbarenik*, range in size from one acre divided into four individual holdings, to half an acre divided into four holdings; in other cases, plots of a quarter to one-fifth of an acre worked by one person. All plots are fenced, and sometimes a living-hut is built inside the fenced area; occasionally it was found that elderly Dorobo were allowed by Nandi squatters to have a little piece of their cultivated land to work.

European farmers in the district, with whom the Dorobo land question was discussed, seemed not unwilling to let the Dorobo live unmolested on their land provided they gave no trouble; but the government authorities thought otherwise, and the position of a Dorobo who did not choose to become a squatter in order to live on what he considered his own land was thus precarious.

Cultivation Methods and Crops

Two main crops are grown, eleusine, *paiek*, and maize, *ipandek*. Millet had not been grown by 1940, though they bought it from the Nandi. Sweet potatoes, *ropoonik*, are sometimes grown in very limited quantities. Implements are the heart-shaped hoe and the panga or cutlass, both obtained from the Nandi. They have also small axes, *ndolut*, and knives, *rotuet* or *camboluet*.

The growing of crops is regulated by the dry and wet seasons, *muainonik*, from October to March, and *iuotet*, from April to September. The land is prepared between January and April, and planted in April or May according to the rain. Cultivation follows the Nandi method, with paring and burning of new land. The seed of eleusine and maize is bought from the Nandi, usually from squatters living nearby. Maize and eleusine are planted together in the same plot, though potatoes are generally grown separately. Eleusine is reaped in the Nandi manner by cutting off the heads; maize is picked by hand. Granaries of Nandi type are sometimes made, but are seldom needed, as the yields are so small that the loft of a hut can generally hold all that is not eaten on the field (as is often the case with maize). Cereals are roughly ground on slabs of granite in the Nandi manner.

Food

Food in the old days consisted mainly of meat supplemented by honey, wild vegetables, and grain bought by exchange from the Nandi. The food supply is now based on their own agricultural produce, supplemented by milk when they have any, and by certain other foods when they can be got. Meat is still obtained by trapping, though seldom by hunting; it includes the flesh of antelopes, monkeys, pigs, and leopards. Honey is got, as already described, from honey-barrels. Wild food, collected in the forest, includes fruit of the *momoniat* (*rubus rigidus*), *lemsiyuet* (*ximenia americana*), and *sasuriet* (*musa ensete*, wild banana), the sap of the *sasuriet*, and leaves of nettle, *siwot*.

Intoxicating drink is of two kinds: the Dorobo honey-wine, *hiphstinik* or *kumik ap lo*, made from honey, and fermented with the long seed-pods of the "sausage

2: Maguire G-5 (ca. 1926) 1927-28
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clans or families,[1] after the manner of the Masai, but there is no difference between their several bearers at the present time. *Mósiro* and *Médiak* Dorobo live and hunt together all over the southern half of the Masai Reserve to-day. They are fairly numerous[2] (for Dorobo), and in many cases are almost indistinguishable, outwardly, from the Masai.

There, however, the similarity ends, as these Dorobo (referred to, henceforward, as *Mósiro* collectively) are the first with whom we have had to deal possessing a language of their own. Reference to the comparative lists of numbers and the list of names of common objects given elsewhere will show the wide difference there is between the language spoken by these people and that of the Masai.

According to Lekite, who was the only man in recent years holding even a semblance of authority among these people, the "home" of the *Mósiro* is at Talamai.[3] He, in common with many Masai and Dorobo elders, admits that the Dorobo originally came from a country designated vaguely as *Juu*,[4] but no living *Mósiroi* can remember the time when the majority of his people did not live at or near to Talamai.

The *Mósiro* are to be found, occasionally, living with the Masai in the kraals of the latter. They are sometimes (particularly when game and honey are scarce) to be found in small rude kraals of their own, close to the Masai. In these kraals will sometimes be seen a few goats or sheep and almost always fowls.[5] More often, however, the *Mósiro* live in tiny communities (sometimes a man, his wife and their children alone) in the depths of the bush. There they exist, houseless save for a rude shelter of skins within a primitive thorn stockade, by hunting and gathering roots and honey. When supplies run short they beg from the Masai. When a large animal is shot or dies from natural causes the *Mósiro* in the vicinity seem to become aware of the event in the most uncanny way. They will appear unexpectedly, make their camp, and remain until the carcass has been completely denuded of flesh. The meat is not eaten quite raw, but is subjected to a hasty charring, the

[1] More probably the former.
[2] Possibly 1000 souls, including the women and children.
[3] See note 3, p. 127. [4] *Aboos*: in this case meaning the north.
[5] The Masai regard the eating of fowls or eggs as unclean.

2: Maguire G-5 (ca. 1926) 1927-28
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duration of which is in inverse ratio to its toothsomeness and the severity of the cook's hunger.

The Masai are good to the *Mósiro* and seldom refuse them a share in whatever food is obtainable—be it milk, meat or grain. The *Mósiro* expect this; in fact, many of them seem to look on free rations from the Masai as their right. The reason for this is stated to be that the *Mósiro* helped the Masai on many occasions in the past (particularly during the great rinderpest epidemic in the early 'nineties) by hunting for them when starvation had overcome the ingrained antipathy of the Masai to venison. In addition, before the coming of European rule many elephants were killed by the *Mósiro* at the request of the Masai. Lekite told me of one drive in which he and about thirty *Mósiro* were engaged during which sixteen elephants were killed.

When a *Mósiroi* obtained cattle he used, unless restrained by his more prudent friends, to slaughter and eat them in the shortest possible time. Up to quite recently, a beast was valued by the *Mósiroi* only for the amount of meat it was capable of providing, but nowadays a few of them are beginning to herd cattle in a small way and some even live as Masai. It is interesting to note that many of the older generation, particularly the women, profess an aversion to having cattle in the vicinity of their own dwelling- or sleeping-places.

A few *Mósiro* till the land, but in a half-hearted way. They are extremely improvident and prefer to risk almost inevitable famine rather than to exert themselves in cultivating grain. They never expect their women to work in such small plantations as they may have. A *Mósiroi* will cheerfully tramp the bush for a week or more, picking up a most precarious existence on tubers and roots, and will consider himself well repaid if he returns with a few pounds of honey. He will be horrified at the idea of putting in one hour's work each day on a mealie patch for the same length of time.

In the bush, very little in the way of food comes amiss to the *Mósiroi*. Failing meat, his favourite food is honey, but this is regarded as a delicacy and would be eaten wholesale only under the most exceptional circumstances. If meat and honey are unobtainable, the *Mósiroi* has at his command an extensive

6:Huntingford E-5 (1938-1939) 1953 FL6 Dorobo FL6

262 [136] eastern part of the area and towards Londiani. Monkeys and pigs are found both in and outside the forest; leopards live on the edge, and lions are still occasionally met with in the open country near the forest. Antelopes are still found, but they are not so plentiful as they used to be.

Honey is produced in honey-barrels. This constitutes a special department of Dorobo life, and will be described in § 2 below.

Wild vegetable foods which grow in and round the forest are eaten both cooked and raw as relishes or additions to the staple diet of meat and [222] [462] cereals; the task of collecting vegetable food is usually performed by the women. Recorded wild foods eaten are:

Fruit of the *sitotik*, which are something like white currants, dried in the sun and eaten raw.
Fruit of the plant *momonyat*, rubus rigidus.
Fruit of the *lemeiyuet*, ximenia americana.
Fruit of the *sasuriet*, Musa ensete, the wild banana.
Leaves of the *sinot*, girardinia condensata, nettle.
Sap of the wild banana, eaten in place of what the Nandi call *kimiet* or 'porridge'.

222 Banana sap is collected by sticking a flat piece of wood into an incision made in the stem of the tree; a receptacle is hung on the end of the wood and left there for the sap to drip into it. The fruit of the wild banana (a very ●252 poor substitute for the cultivated kind) is placed on the drying tray (*sainet*) over the fire till it is roasted by the heat, and is then broken up with two stones and chewed; it is very hard. Tobacco is bought from the Nandi.

276 439 263 [258] [171] Before trade salt was obtainable through the Nandi, the Dorobo made a substitute from the leaves of the *tepenguet* bush (aemilia integrifolia), or of the *serenguet* tree. Leaves were burned, and the ashes collected in a suitable receptacle, a little water was poured on them and mixed, and the resulting liquid was added to food as needed. Some of the Bantu Kavirondo used to make a similar substitute for salt.

273 [824] Intoxicating drink is chiefly made of honey, though now a little eleusine beer is made in the Nandi manner. The Dorobo method of making *kipketinik* or *kumik ap lo*, "honey-wine", is as follows. As a fermenting agent, the seed-pods of the *rotinnet* tree (kigelia aethiopica or the sausage tree), which may be as much as a foot long and four inches thick, are boiled till quite soft when they are cut into strips and put into the honey to make it ferment. A Dorobo description of the process of making the drink is this:

Kenam rutik, kepele mat si koherer;
They-are-taken the-seed-pods, they-are-boiled-on the-fire that they-may-be-split;
kiune ilosto si kipete tukuk ee somisee kul
they-are-washed-in the-river that they-may-be-lost the-things which-are dirty till
kepumbunit. Kema si keyomio. Kiinde teret
they-become-soft. They-are-put-in-the-sun that they-may-dry. They-are-put-into the-po
ole mii kumiat puc, si konuanit, kiinde eñgaret
where there-is the-honey only, that it-may-become-bitter, there-is-put the-wate

6:Huntingford E-5 (1938-1939) 1953 FL6 Dorobo FL6

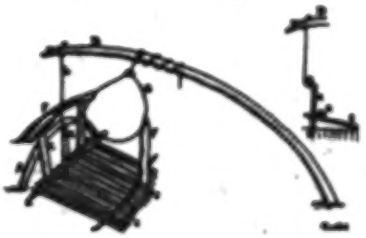

Fig. 5. A Simpler Kind of Springe. This trap has no "trigger-peg". The animal treads on the platform and by so doing presses it against the upright K to which liana *b* is attached, thus releasing the liana and allowing the bent stick D to spring upright and tighten the noose round the neck of the quarry.

when an animal treads on it, allowing the liana to slip over the top and thus release the bent stick D.

Hunting parties might be made up by as many as eight men, though I think that probably four or five was a more usual number. A common practice was for half the party to work along one bank of a stream and the rest along the other bank, so that if there was nothing on one side, those on the other side might be more successful; or if the quarry got across the stream, the men on the other side would be able to deal with it. When a kill was made, all the hunters assembled. The animal was skinned, the meat cut up, and some of it eaten on the spot, either raw, or partly cooked by laying it across a rough wooden framework over a fire. The rest of the meat was divided among them and taken home. In the best days, when meat was plentiful, what was left over was dried and kept either as a reserve or else exchanged with the Nandi for eleusine and millet. A stack of dried meat (*sirikeniot*) about 2 ft. square, was sold for about 25 lbs. of grain. Meat is cut into strips (*sir*, whence *sirikeniot*) which are laid out on the drying tray or loft over the fire to be smoke-cured after being dried on the roof of a hut or in the fork of a tree.

c) Agriculture

Since they can no longer hunt, and present conditions are[18] not favourable for the acquisition of cattle on a large scale (even if the Dorobo had the means of so doing), the adoption of agriculture has become an economic necessity, and methods, implements, and seed have been obtained from the Nandi. This change from hunting to agriculture has taken place virtually between the years 1927 and 1938. In the first of these years the area cultivated by them was so small as to be negligible; but by the latter year their lives were, as we have seen, to a great deal centered on agriculture. And as with hunting in the old days, so with agriculture to-day, the growing of crops is naturally regulated by the wet and dry seasons and the main divisions of the agricultural year are:

January to April: preparation of the land.
April-May: planting.
September: reaping.

[18] This refers to the years 1938-39.

6:Huntingford E-5 (1938-1939) 1953 FL6 Dorobo FL6

is to get as much as possible of the crop out of the way so that ploughing can start at once without having to wait till the crop is ripe. But the Dorobo had, all the same, made a step forward, for a solid, compact stook is less likely to be devastated by animals than plants standing scattered over a field.

By 25 November, 1938 the Kipukua people had reaped their crops. The shamba here was about an acre in extent, and was divided into four approximately equal-sized plots. There was little maize, for some had been eaten on the field and some had been destroyed by vermin; what was left had been stooked, and anything like an accurate estimate was impossible, though there might have been two or perhaps three bags in the stooks. If we estimate that the equivalent of two bags might have been eaten, and two more destroyed by vermin, we have about 6 or 7 bags, a somewhat high estimate for a crop grown mixed with eleusine, but not impossible[99]. Of eleusine, one plot yielded 3 bags, and another 2 bags (that is 5 bags from half an acre), not a great deal, certainly, but a fair yield under such conditions, and most useful as food, for the Dorobo eat most of their eleusine, and turn very little of it into beer. Maize and eleusine are ground by crushing on slabs of granite (*litwito*), and the resulting meal is made into gruel (*muaarek*) for the children, and stiff porridge (*kimiet*) for the older people; it is generally eaten with a mess of vegetable food (*ingurk*) prepared separately.

Storage of crops is not yet a very difficult problem. A few of the Dorobo, it is true, have built granaries of Nandi type, hidden just inside the forest to prevent thefts by the Nandi, for anyone can lift up the roof of such a granary in the night. But since so much of the maize is eaten on the field, what is left at harvest time can be stored in the loft; and the same applies to eleusine, for it does not yield a large amount of grain. I saw no millet growing, and the Dorobo said they bought it from the Nandi.

As we have already noted, agricultural labour is divided to a certain extent between the sexes, but the distinction is not very sharp, and it was found to work out in the following way:

Men:	Both:	Women:
Heavy preliminary work	Digging	
Planting	Weeding	Collecting and burning weeds
	Reaping	

The heavy work includes lopping off branches in the Nandi manner, clearing bushes, and breaking up the ground when hard. Women may also plant, but the tendency seems to be for men to do it, though there is no absolute rule against women planting. Children help with the weeding, and herd the goats when there are any; old men herd cattle, and women also sometimes herd goats.

The Dorobo had not by 1939 acquired the Nandi belief that each eleusine crop requires new land, which in the circumstances is just as well; but they do not hesitate to give up using land which is unproductive. Thus,

[99] The bag is the standard 2 ½ lb. gunny bag used in East Africa, holding 200 lbs. of maize.

/232 cont./

262 If lean times then come, one tries, as well as one can, to appease
the stomach with wild roots or tubers, with berries or other small
[252] fruits, with honey and honey beer. Meat is seldom eaten raw,
251 usually boiled or roasted at the open fire. For storage it is cut into
439 long strips that are hung to dry in the sun. When the meat is well
231 dried, it is stowed away in the aforementioned tree, close to the
camp; cattle and small livestock, which are bought from the Masai
262 for ivory, are not kept, but slaughtered immediately. Insofar as the
[439] Wandorobo, in barter with sedentary tribes, are able to come into
the possession of vegetables, they also live on these, but actually
only during times when, for some reason, only little game is to be
had. Otherwise the vegetable food acquired by trade constitutes
only a side dish, especially for woman and children. Many of them
[272] detest milk and base this on the fact that their stomachs, accustomed
only to meat diet from early childhood, do not tolerate it. Some
go so far as to throw away the udder of a slaughtered cow, although
[171] they eat that of a slain piece of game. There indeed seems to be no
doubt but that the previously mentioned Masai belief, according to
which milk and meat must not be brought together, rests on these
273 customs. Besides water, honey beer, which they make in the same
[271] way as the Masai, also serves them as a beverage. The latter prize
[171] that made by them more than their own, which probably rests on the
fact that the Wandorobo keep the good honey for themselves and sell
264 only the inferior kind. Men, women, and children eat together.
[252] Both the foods for the man, his wives, and children and, on the other
[415] hand, those for the youth and his favorite girl are cooked in one pot.
From this the food is poured into small wooden bowls (kitokoi), of
273 which each adult sharing in the meal has his own. From the food
171 laws of the Masai, the custom that young unmarried men may not
drink honey beer is still found here as a survival. Tobacco is a
276 luxury of the married. Men smoke it, coarsely cut, in pipes carved
by themselves. Ground to powder and mixed with a little steppe
salt and /233/ fat, it serves both men and women for snuffing.
Women also like to chew the snuff.

/247 cont./

278 415 252 (411) 224 (234) (231) When the cooking of the poison is finished, the pot is cleaned with sand and water and used again for the preparation of food. The arrow point is thoroughly cleaned, heated red-hot, and poisoned anew.

The region in question for hunting has been divided by the El dorobo into definite districts, each of which may be hunted in only the community of its inhabitants. A district, in turn, consists of a number of precincts, whose grassy plains are burned off in a sequence following from their location, the weather conditions, etc. The wild animals then gather to graze on the grass soon freshly sprouting after the burning. This management explains why the hunter is only rarely /248/ forced to return home without booty and why he is able to feed his family continuously and regularly from the yields of his hunting.

The game in general in East Africa is game frequenting the same spot; but the meaning of this statement must be modified in accordance with the relatively enormously large areas here. Just as in Germany a hunter expects a herd of deer at a particular time on a particular knoll, the ol doroboni can quite certainly count on finding the game expected by him at the appropriate time in a region whose diameter amounts to approximately 3-5 kilometers. Considerable disturbances (136) are caused, of course, by the appearance of large predatory animals, especially lions almost always hunting in herds and the hyena dogs always hunting together in larger numbers.

In practicing hunting the men split up in such a way that the younger ones do the stalking on the open steppe, whereas the older ones lie in wait at the watering places of the game. Stalking requires incomparably greater endurance and skill than at home. The ol doroboni must more accurately watch the wind, since his own strong odor makes it extremely easy for the animal to pick up the scent. He must take the greatest pains to conceal himself from the sight of the animal, since he is unfamiliar with any kind of adaptation to the region and the surroundings, so that his black body stands out clearly, even at great distances, on the usually light yellow steppe. The difficulty of the rush is further increased by the primitive nature of his weapons, which permit him to make an accurate shot only at 20 to 30 meters. In what concerns the patience, perseverence, and dexterity that the Wandorobo show in this, a European hunter can